



U. S. Department of Justice
United States Attorney
Eastern District of Washington

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE WEDNESDAY, March 15, 2006	FOR INFORMATION CONTACT: Greg Shogren Assistant US Attorney (509) 454-4425
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IDENTITY THEFT SYMPOSIUM

Yakima, Washington -- Federal and county prosecutors and state, local and federal law enforcement officers will attend a day-long identity theft symposium in Yakima on Wednesday, March 15. The symposium will provide information and training in the investigation and prosecution of identity theft crimes. James McDevitt, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Washington, announced that his office, federal agents and state and local law enforcement officers are vigorously targeting persons committing identity theft crimes in this district. McDevitt also said that identity theft is the fastest growing crime in America and has had a serious impact on communities throughout Eastern Washington.

Assistant United States Attorney Greg Shogren will speak at the symposium. He will explain that under federal criminal law, aggravated identity theft takes place when someone knowingly transfers, possesses, or uses, without lawful authority, the identification of another person in connection with a violation of federal law or conduct that constitutes a felony under any applicable state or local law. Shogren said that his office has been aggressively and successfully prosecuting identity theft crimes in the Yakima and Tri-Cities areas for the last year and a half. Most of these identity theft cases began with the theft of mail from rural mail boxes and resulted in the counterfeiting of checks using stolen account numbers, bogus applications for credit card accounts, and forgeries of legitimate checks stolen from the mail. Shogren says that the message for identity thieves is that they had better be looking over their shoulders because law enforcement officers will be actively pursuing them.

United States Postal Inspectors from Seattle and Spokane as well as Secret Service agents from Spokane have increased their presence in the Yakima area to deal with the surge in identity theft crimes. Resident Agent in Charge Kevin Miller of the Secret Service said that his office is aggressively pursuing several investigations involving the counterfeiting of United States currency and identity theft involving stolen checks in the Yakima area.

Inspector Larry Carlier of the United States Postal Inspection Service in Spokane advises citizens who have rural route mail boxes that they can take steps to prevent mail and identity theft. He said that they should never send items from their mail boxes, rather, they should take

outgoing items to the post office or to the big blue drop boxes. Carlier says that rural mail box holders should consider using post office boxes or locking type mail boxes to prevent unauthorized entry. Citizens should also monitor their bank account balances and credit card account balances on a frequent basis in order to detect unauthorized entry to their accounts. Carlier said that citizens should obtain credit reports at least annually and look for unfamiliar queries to their credit and look for indications of late payments and collections actions which should not be there.

To Report Identity Theft or related crimes, contact:

Yakima County Sheriff's Office
(509) 574-2500

U.S. Postal Inspection Service
Spokane: (509) 624-1727

U.S. Secret Service
Spokane: (509) 353-2532

Social Security Administration – Fraud Hotline
(800) 269-0271

Federal Trade Commission
1-877-ID-THEFT (1-877-438-4338)